

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
NORTH ADAMS**

**INFORMANT: HAROLD A. JORDAN
INTERVIEWER: JENNIFER KEMP
DATE: MAY 12, 1989
PLACE: DHS MUSIC PRACTICE ROOM**

**H = HAROLD
J = JENNIFER**

SG-NA-T023

[The first half of this tape was transcribed with the volume set at its highest level. Even at this level much of the conversation was unintelligible and could not be transcribed. The second half of the tape is much clearer]

Tape begins with interviewer in mid-sentence:

J: . . .And I'm going to be interviewing Harold Jordan. Today's date is May the 12th, 1989 and it's exactly twelve o'clock.

Harold, first I'm going to ask you a little bit about your family. [H: That's fine] Where were your mother and father born?

H: Well my mother, my mother was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts [sounds like thirty-nine] years ago. And my father was born in Portland, Maine. They both grew up there. And they met at Boston University. [J: Oh! Interesting] They met in College.

J: That's pretty nice. And do you have any idea what made them decide to move here?

H: Um, they were both teaching high school at the time. My father got [unclear] State College here. And so he came specifically for the job.

J: Oh! So is that what he does now for a living?

H: Yes.

J: Okay. And your Mom?

H: Um, my Mom stopped working when she had kids and never went back.

J: Uh huh, that usually happens.

H: She worked the summer and stuff in her family business in Maine.

J: Oh, well that's very nice. At least you have a place to go away to anyways.

H: Right.

J: Um, do, do you have any idea whether they like it here, or if they plan on staying here?

H: Um, they do not like it here. They both plan on leaving as soon as possible. [J: Uh (laughs)]
Um, they both grew up near the, near the ocean. [J: Right. There's quite a difference I'm sure.]
So they'll probably be going back. [Rest of comment unclear]

J: How many children are there in your family?

H: Four.

J: And where are you in the [unclear]?

H: I'm the baby.

J: Oh, so as soon as you're gone they're off to Maine.

H: As soon as I'm gone, they're gone.

J: Oh that's nice. Well [unclear] anyways. Um, so obviously neither of your parents attended schools in North Adams, right?

H: No. [Comment unclear]

J: Now um, were you born here in North Adams?

H: Yup. I was the only one in my family.

J: What about your brothers and sisters?

H: Um, my sisters and both my brothers were born in Southwick.

J: Which is where?

H: Southwick, Massachusetts. [J: Unclear] Yes, a little south of Worcester. [J: Oh] They uh
(--) Well my oldest brother is ten years older than I am. So there's like a pretty big difference

there. [Comment unclear]

J: Did they um, so they did get their schooling there then right?

H: Um, my two brothers went to school there. My sister was about a month, a year and a half older [unclear]. [J: Oh, so she was primarily educated here] She went to school in North Adams, but she wasn't born here.

J: So she [unclear] a little bit of both I would think. Um, where were your grandparents from? Do you know?

H: My grandparents on my mother's side were born in England and they came and traveled here when they were very young. [J: Umhm] I'm not sure, probably like four or five people, or if their parents brought them over.

Um, my father's parents were both from Maine. I don't, I don't really know where they originally came from. As far as the family knows they just wandered down that hill sometime. So they don't, they don't really know what country they're from, but they're last name is [Filio?] on my father's mother's side. So there's probably some Italian blood there.

J: Yeah, I know a couple of Italians that live around the area. That's pretty interesting coming from such a long distance, [rest of comments unclear] Um, have you heard any like grandparent stories, or even parent stories [few words unclear] that you think would be kind of interesting?

H: No. There's nothing much in the way of North Adams. Of course that's my parent's blood. [J: Right] Basically I think the only, the only important things that you hear a lot about in the generations differences is that you know, they had twelve children, or they had sixteen children, [J: Umhm] they had forty uncles. It's all too confusing. So there's no, there's no one or two things that are extraordinary. No presidents in the family or anything [unclear].

J: [Laughs] [Comment unclear] Is there anything that you can think of about your family that you would say would be [unclear]?

H: Um. My, I can't, I wouldn't say we're unique. I think we're a lot like a lot of other people. [J: Umhm] Um (--)

J: But I mean is there anything special that you guys do that you don't, might not see in other families [unclear]?

H: We leave, we leave North Adams as quickly as possible in the summer. I don't know if that's important.

J: No, that's pretty normal.

H: Uh, you know, I would say we don't really have any strong ties to the area. [J: uh huh] But you know, all of my friends are here in the summertime and [J: right] I have to, I just leave. But.

J: Do you work in the summer here?

H: I work in the summer in Maine in motels and [unclear].

J: Oh! That's really nice.

H: I was a chambermaid.

J: Oh, that must have been interesting.

H: Yeah. I was (--) Well most of what we have are French Canadians come down vacationing. And so all the uh, ladies you know, say, "oh, you can clean, you can do windows?" "Oh, here I have nice young daughter." No thank you. No thank you. So it's interesting.

J: That must be [unclear].

H: [Comment unclear]

J: That's good. Well at least you have something to do. And if you don't want to be here in North Adams you have the opportunity to be elsewhere. Um, I have another question that has to do with your brother and sister aspect. Being the youngest in your family did you find that (a) people already knew you before they, before you knew them, and (b) did you find that people were always like, "well your brother and sister was like this and how come you can't be like that?" Did you find any problems with that?

H: I don't, I don't think anyone compared me to my brothers and sisters too much. I did know, like I knew a lot of my sisters friends. [J: Right] So in a way [rest of comment unclear] [Next comment unclear]. It's true that like I heard a lot about school before I had to go. You know, the first children they say [rest of comment unclear]. But I knew [unclear] before I went. [Few words unclear] someone in the family had been through it all before [J: right] and you know, get your big brother to tell you about it. It makes a lot of things easier. But I don't think being the youngest is awful. I kind of enjoyed it.

J: Really. Did you find that you were like the baby of the family? You got away with a lot more things than [rest of comment unclear]

H: Um, I didn't find that I got away with a lot of things. I can say that. But, well maybe it wasn't that much fun come to think of it. I always had hand-me-down clothes. [J: Yeah] But I think, I think that (--) I mean you can do things you know, and you're not called a child, or you're not called immature for doing [unclear]. But you get in trouble for a lot of stuff too. Everyone else has grown out of the stage of getting in trouble. [Comment unclear]

J: Plus everybody else has already been through it and they've already done all of the things bad. So (--)

H: They know what you're going to do before you do it.

J: It's kind of a curse. Exactly.

H: And you can't get away with too much.

J: You can't get away with a whole lot of stuff. It must be nice having, I mean four isn't really a large family, but I mean for this, this day and age that is kind of a large family.

H: It's, it's pretty large [few words unclear].

J: Have you found a lot of benefits in [unclear]?

H: I wouldn't say there's many benefits. Um, my, my two brothers were eight and ten years older than I was. So they were pretty much grown up and gone. [J: (unclear). Yeah] I grew up basically with my sister. It was like a two child household. [J: Umhm, more like a two family, yeah. Umhm] But they come, you know, vacations and Christmas and things. [J: Well that's nice] So.

J: Yeah. Bring their laundry home and you know [unclear].

H: It's more like a technical thing with the four of us, but (--)

J: Oh, umhm. The numbers are there, but not really. Um, I wish I was (--) I've always wanted to have an older brother [unclear].

H: You want two?

J: No, that's okay.

H: [Comment unclear]

J: That's all right. We're going to talk a bit about education, my favorite subject. [H: Oh] Now where did you receive all of your education?

H: I received all of my education right here in good old North Adams.

J: [Comment unclear]

H: From the very first day of kindergarten in Mark Hopkins School.

J: And how was that? [Comment unclear]

H: I remember sand piles, but I don't know if that's [unclear]. I think Mark Hopkins was, it was a small school [J: right] and I think it was advantageous to go there. I (--) You know, you got a lot more help, individualized help [unclear]. [J: Right] You know, a more hospitable place I

think. [J: Um] Um, of course it's closed now. So [rest of comment unclear].

J: It was that nice they closed up!

H: But um, Mark Hopkins I enjoyed. Uh, the Middle School I kind of regret now. I don't really think much educational was done there. [J: Umhm] Um, you know, at the time it didn't seem important, but now. [J: Right] I know kids who went away to private school and came back and they learned something in those three years and I didn't. [J: Right, umhm] So that made, that made a difference. And I kind of, I kind of regret that though. But it didn't, at the time it didn't seem important. [Comment unclear]

J: So you, so you kind of feel cheated out of that then, or a least [rest of comment unclear].

H: Um, I, I wouldn't, I don't know if I'm cheated. I think other students were benefited though if they left, you know. [J: Uh huh] I would, I would [comment], but other, other students [rest of comment unclear].

J: So you kind of wish that you had the opportunity to [rest of comment unclear].

H: Yeah. If I'd realized at the time and had [few words unclear] better off.

J: Umhm. And how about high school?

H: Um, high school, Drury here, it's average I would say. You know there's some advantages and there are some disadvantages, but I think overall it's got a bad reputation [J: right] um, from other communities. But I don't think it's that bad. I would say, you know, I would give it an average [rest of comment unclear].

J: Well let's see now. Um, did you (--) Obviously [comment unclear]. But like what would you say could be done to improve something like the Middle School, or even our High School? What could we do to improve our education?

H: I'm, I can't explain the problem. I think that I honestly don't know the solution. [J: Umhm] Now if someone did they'd make a fortune at solving these problems. But um, for some reason it was like half of the student body who just doesn't seem interested in learning, and [rest of comment unclear]. And you know, there's a clean, clean cut difference I would say. [J: Umhm] You know, about half of the students are interested in learning and half of them aren't. So I don't know what you can do to give the other students an incentive, because I don't really know what's causing them to feel that way. [Comment unclear]

J: Right. Umhm. So if we could improve on that somehow [H: yeah] then maybe [few words unclear] better education system. What do you think about what has just recently happened with a lot of lay-off of a lot of teachers, or a least they're [few words unclear].

H: Um. Yeah. Well I think that most of them are going to be hired back like some of them recently. [J: Right] But um, I think it's just another sign of why North Adams has such a

reputation as a poor community and [J: umhm] you know, the fact that it does have to consider these things practically every year. [J: Right] Um, and I think although we can be happy that the teachers aren't being forced out, you have to consider that in lieu of that it can be, you know, books aren't going to be bought and other, other things that students um, are going to miss out on. So it's kind of a half a dozen [few words unclear] you know, [J: right] which way you go.

J: Umhm. [Comment unclear] Last night when I had my interview with Kelly and he, he [rest of comment unclear]. The thing that I had said was that I felt that a lot of kids more than myself were cheated out of it [unclear], because I consider myself lucky that teachers sometimes gave me a little extra. You know, the extra emphasis. [Comment unclear]

H: Well I think Drury especially, but any school, you're going to get out of an education what you put into it. I think if you got extra help it's because you went and asked for it. And the problem is that many students don't go in and ask, or don't even want to be with their teachers. You know? So [comment unclear]. But I don't think (--) I think people cheat themselves more than the school cheats them. I think if they were interested they could get everything they need.

J: Uh huh. I didn't think of that. That's really good [unclear].
Um, do you think that the students that graduate from our area, [few words unclear] high school know enough about the world that we are in? Like I know that there's (--) With myself personally, I probably wouldn't have known a whole lot about the elections unless it weren't for the [unclear] paper, and we had to do it. Do you think that that's common among a lot of our high school students?

H: I think um, high school students here at Drury don't, don't get involved in news [rest of comment unclear]. They don't read enough, especially you know, newspapers, magazines [J: right] [unclear]. But I think that's common in a lot of high schools. I know kids who have left Drury say you know, that the people they met are basically just like them. [J: Umhm] And so I, I don't see that as particularly wrong with Drury, but maybe just wrong with all high school students in general.

J: What would you say like when, when other countries you know, Germany and China, actually the Chinese and the Japanese and countries out in the Middle East and over in Europe, it seems to me that they are getting a lot more education than we are. Do you feel the same way?

H: Well again, I mean there are a lot of studies that show, like especially I know Japanese students um, in high school are exceeding a level [unclear] in college and universities. I think a lot of that has to do with sense of discipline that, I mean it's part of their heritage. [J: Right] It's come down um, through their parents and ancestors. And I think they, they try a lot harder to learn. Um, a lot of other countries if you don't do well in high school you cannot go to college. And that's quite an incentive to do well in high school, especially if you want to go on. [J: It would be for me] And I think students here sometimes figure well, as long as I graduate I can go to college if I want [rest of comment unclear] [J: Umhm] And so they don't try too hard. [Comment unclear] But I think students who try their hardest and get out of, get out of school a lot, they're putting a lot into it, I think they're, they're as well off as any, any other nation.

J: [Unclear] Um, I guess your education here (--) I mean you're, you obviously are doing very well in school, um, but education in general I guess maybe not that great, but it's not that bad either. Um, is there anything really valuable that you've, you've learned, or anything that you've really taken up. And it doesn't have to be fact, but just something that you've learned in your education?

H: Um, I think especially in high school the most important lesson I've learned is the consistency. You have to keep trying. You have to do your every night if you want to know what's going on at the end of the semester. [J: the end of the week] You can't just do it when you feel like it. You know, you have to keep [unclear]. I think that's like a, a general lesson [few words unclear]

J: Umhm. Have you found that um, you've been able to use that in things such as like a job or something like that?

H: I, I don't notice it, but I think subconsciously I do. I think you know, anything (--) I think once you've learned a lesson anything you do you act that way and you know, it's not something you notice but I'm sure it's there.

J: Okay. Um, I'm assuming [rest of comment unclear] all that big deal and everything. If you don't, well I'm asking the question anyway. [H: Unclear] Um, would you want [rest of question unclear]

H: Um, I wouldn't be opposed to it let's say. I, I'm not, I honestly don't think I'll be back here, but it's not that I wouldn't want to be so much as you know, I have no family in the area but my immediate relatives now. [J: Right] So um, I'll probably you know, work somewhere else. If I were here more I wouldn't mind. I wouldn't mind my children you know, going to North Adams schools.

J: [Comment unclear] Um, this is a question coming um, it has to do with the students around here. Um, did you ever find that pressure and I mean both academic um, from the teachers, from your parents and off of peer pressure from students, did you find that that was a big, big factor in the way you performed in school and the different kinds of things that you've done?

H: Um, I think peer pressure is the most obvious in school. You know, kids want to do [Few words unclear], they want to act differently, [few words unclear], and that's very very important for them. Um, pressure from the parents it's hard to see, because you don't, you know it happens at home and you don't really know who, who [unclear]. [J: Right, umhm] Um, and teacher, I don't think students [few words unclear]. Sometimes, sometimes they treat them like, they realize that the teacher is right, but I don't think they take pressure from teachers too seriously. You know, it's, (--) [J: unclear] Well if they know it's right, they probably should, but they should also, they also have to try what they think is right. [J: Right, umhm] Till they, till they experience failure they're not going to believe you know, that they're wrong. [J: That's true] It's important to, it's important to try things and fail sometimes too.

J: Umhm. Um, have you found that being educated in North Adams has helped you to define

things that you, no one understands? And again I don't mean as fact, [H: unclear] but like they um,(--) The thing that I was thinking about was um, success. Like has being educated here help you to be able, to be able define that word? Like what it means to you and how you feel about it?

H: Um, well the fact is [unclear] I think it's a very individualized goal. Maybe living in North Adams, which is you know, basically poorer than many communities and maybe you have lower goals. That might be dangerous of course [few words unclear], [J: umhm] but I think it's more you know, important what your philosophy is about anything around you. [J: Right] Because you know there are plenty of, plenty of students here who have succeeded you know, simply because of their idea of success were strong enough to carry them on.

J: Right. Um, well did you get this philosophy from your education you think, or was it more so from like you say, things that you decided on your own?

H: Um, I think education has a small part of it, but most, mostly you know, it's an individualized thing that you have to realize yourself. And you have to set your own, you have to set your own goals.

J: Umhm. Are you planning on going to college next year? [H: Yes] [Few words unclear] Where are you going?

H: [Comment unclear] [J: Oh, you want to go] Um, I'm going to the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware.

J: Ooh, real nice. Well that's quite distinctive distance away. Uh, was the city of North Adams itself a factor in your going [rest of comment unclear]?

H: Um, no. I don't think (--) The only thing North Adams might have had to do with it is that I didn't for example, even if I hadn't agreed on college, I think a student should you know, move away for awhile [unclear] [J: umhm] and I think college is a good time to do it. So like I didn't, I didn't plan on going to school in the immediate area [J: right], but North Adams didn't really affect where I decided to go.

J: Right. It was your attitude about leaving [unclear].

H: [Unclear] If I had been somewhere else I might have come to North Adams. [Comment unclear]

J: You feel that you made the right decision?

H: Um, I'll tell you a lot better four years from now, but it looks all right. You know, it looks, looks all right right now.

J: What are you planning on majoring in?

H: Um, I'm majoring in mathematics.

J: Oh, that's convenient. [H: is that convenient?] That's good. Um, were the people here at school, like the guidance councilors and the [unclear], the secretaries that work here, did you feel that they helped you out a lot in preparation and also in making your decision?

H: Um, I think in preparation that there's not really enough done, you know? I think there's a lot, a lot of procrastinating by everyone [J: including the staff also?]. [Comment unclear] But um, I think you know, everything just comes down the senior year because nothing has happened until then. So you come back to the following senior year and like oh gosh, I don't know what I'm doing next year. [J: Umhm] I've got to do something. So I think like a lot could be done in the junior year to prepare seniors [unclear]. In a way there are some programs and things, but you know, there's not much participation in them. [J: Right] If the students realized you know, they're going to have to make a big decision one year from now maybe they'd get into it. [J: If I knew I no I would have] Maybe they'd get more involved.

J: [Comment unclear]

H: They were helpful um, you know. I got all, got everything done in time. [J: umhm] [Comment unclear], all the technical work you have to do. [Comment unclear] I think they were helpful. [J: Umhm] Um, as far as the decision making goes there wasn't really much to do in the high school, you know? [J: Right] My guidance councilor wanted me to go to MIT, but unfortunately she wasn't handing me a check to pay for it [J: right] and my parents weren't either. So you know, that was basically a non-school related decision, you know. I wouldn't have mattered what high school I was in [J: right] I'd still go to the University of Delaware.

J: Right, umhm. So would you say that finances is probably a major part of your decision to [unclear]?

H: It was probably first and second on the list. [Chuckles] [J: Oh!] It was a very important one.

J: Sounds like mine. [H: Yeah] Are you disappointed in that, or you know? Because I know that some kids (--)

H: No, I'm not disappointed. I mean there's, there's advantages of course. Uh, you might get a better education somewhere else, but there's also a lot of stress and a lot of pressure. And you know I'm not opposed to enjoying my career for my life. So that won't be awful. And going through a, actually a larger school, but going through a school um, you know, that actively spots your attendance, you know? [J: (Chuckles) And they'll pay you for that.] But if somewhere there doesn't want you, you know, it's a little worse. A little more [few words unclear]. You're more likely to succeed I guess than (--) A little more comfortable knowing that they wanted you to attend.

J: That's good. I'm sure you probably made the right decision [unclear].

H: I hope so.

J: I'm sure you did. So we'll all, when we come back for reunions we'll all find out how you did. We'll say, "did Harold ever make it or what?" [Chuckles] Um, okay. Now we're going to talk a little bit about North Adams itself. If you were a passerby, or a tourist who is coming through for a few days, what would you say your first impression of North Adams would be?

H: Well [few words unclear] drive through and not see it. [J: Okay! (Chuckles)] Um, if I was here for a few days I think the impression that I would get is that there's not much happening here. Everything is historic. [J: Umhm] You know, everything is what North Adams was. There's nothing left, [J: Umhm] except (--) It's partly true, but it's also partly the fault of what we have here is a heritage to the park. [Comment unclear] And you know, Hoover Tunnel built in 1861 or something. Everything here is history. So I think you know, you might get the impression that's there's nothing, no one left here, and it's a ghost town. [J: Right, uh huh] So that's kind of disrupting, but I think that's what you'd notice. [Comment unclear]

J: Uh, yeah, not very good! Um, does the historicness bother you about North Adams itself?

H: No, it doesn't bother me. It's great that it has a nice history, but we ought to be stressing what we're going to do in the future, and not as much (--) The people know that it's not all, all history [unclear].

J: Right, umhm. Um, are there things in North Adams that would make a difference [rest of question unclear].

H: Um, well I think North Adams for one thing is a very tightly packed city. And due to the mountains you know, there are only so many places where houses are built. Even, even though there is a small population in a small area [J: right] geogr (--) geography (--) [J: geographically] that's the word. So um, you know, like you can go downtown, you can walk basically anywhere you want to get. [J: Right] And that's, now that's an advantage you know, I think, over some cities. [J: comment unclear] Either you'd have to have a car [unclear], a metro or something just to get around, while here you can do it yourself.

J: Definitely not New York City.

H: So. And that's, that's definitely one neat thing [unclear]. Um, I think another, another thing right now is that the population is growing [unclear] older. [J: Umhm] And without, without some sort of new industry or business in the city here it's going to be growing older eventually. [J: Right] There's not much of a reason for people to come here now. [J: Umhm, (unclear)] So I think that will have some you know, important effects later. [J: Umhm] You know, as the population grows older [J: right], people just can't get around as well. People don't you know, use as many things as they used to. So it will cut down a lot of you know, activities and things.

J: Why do you think it is that our population is getting so much older and our young people are just kind of moving out?

H: Well the population is getting older because basically the people that are here are the ones who, who retired when this factory closed. [J: Right] Now if you had to work you had to go somewhere else and get work. [J: Umhm] But in this [unclear] people are retired [few words unclear]. Many of them did. [J: Umhm] Um, so I think that's, that's why the population is getting older. Children you must know, growing up don't really have too many opportunities in North Adams. You know, they can go to Boston, or at least, at least in Massachusetts at least and you know, get in a technology field. [J: Right, umhm] You know, there's not anything to keep them here. There's nothing holding, there's nothing drawing people to stay here, or to come here. So I think that's why there's no, um, growing you know, younger population.

J: Right, which is unfortunate [few words unclear] in a few years. Um, [rest of comment unclear] Would you say that you have pride in your community?

H: Well I, I hate to say it, but I don't really think I have much pride here. Um, like growing up I've known this isn't really my home. You know, all of my relatives are elsewhere. [J: Right] And so I never really liked the community [unclear] somewhere else. Um, certainly you know, there are people here that I'm going to miss and I don't want to leave, but I don't see myself missing the community [unclear]. So I would say generally little pride if any in North Adams.

J: Right. You think that others have less pride, or the same, or a little bit more in general [unclear]?

H: Um, I think older people who are living here are here because they like it you know, and they're, I would say they're very proud of the community. But I know many students here at the high school have less pride than I do. You know, their goal is to get out of North Adams. It's what they want in life. [J: Umhm] So you know, I think that's basically an important difference there.

J: Umhm. Um, you just talked about how a lot of your relatives lived in different places. Um, have you been to a lot of those different places?

H: Yeah. Basically my father's relatives are you know, still alive and they're all, they're in Maine. [Comment unclear] [J: Right, uh huh] Um, my mother's relatives we visit on Memorial Day, [J: Uh huh] Memorial weekend. [Children's voices in background] [J: Right] But she, she was in, she was an only child. So I have no aunts and uncles on, on her side. And the relatives we have are her aunts and uncles. Um, you know, so I'm not as close to them. [J: Umhm] But we do visit there, so.

J: So you like, (--) Well visiting there then you know what it's like. Um, but would you say that you like those cities a lot better than North Adams at times? [H: Um] Would you want to even consider living in any of those cities?

H: I, yipes. New Bedford is where my mother is from, has a much greater problem I think with the drugs. [Loud noise, sound is much clearer] And as a result of that you know, you see people roaming the streets uh, rather conspicuous looking people. You know, and I think I would be afraid to have my children grow up there. You know I wouldn't, I wouldn't want them to be out

in that type of community. [J: Right] Um, I'm not saying North Adams doesn't have any drugs, but it's much more hidden you know, uphill, safe roaming. You know, there's no, there's no problem like that on the streets anyways.

J: Really? Hm! That's kind of interesting. Well I guess maybe North Adams is a little bit safer. Although I find it hard to imagine that one, but, [Chuckles] for my own self I guess. Um, how do you think that the lack of pride that we were talking about a couple of minutes ago could be turned into pride?

H: Well, I think basically if there were, you know, if North Adams could draw industry. You know, Sprague's is closing basically. They have this small plant left, but it's nothing like it used to be. [J: Umhm] If we had another major industry in the city um, people in schools you know, and growing up would see a reason to stay. You know, maybe they can get a job here. [J: Umhm, right] So I think you know, they'd feel like there was a point to being a community. I think that's basically the important part of pride. You have to feel you belong. [J: Umhm] And I think that'll help. Um, so some, some you know, employer who's actively seeking you know, people in like a growing business [J: uh huh] in the community would really help.

J: Right. You, the word that we keep using, community, do you think that maybe we shouldn't, maybe that's the wrong word to use then to describe our whatever we are? [Laughs] Our group of people?

H: I don't, I mean communities are different, but I don't think there's anything wrong with using the term. Um, you know, North Adams has its, has its bounds. [J: Unclear] And uh, so I, I think that's [unclear]. [Unclear]

J: Oh good. Um, what would you say the best thing about North Adams is?

H: Um, the best thing about North Adams uh, I guess is it's natural beauty. You know, that's what (--) Um, in the fall all the leaves turn color and that's what you know, that is a positive thing. It does bring doors to the city. Um, and I know many people say they wouldn't want to leave here because you know, of the mountains [J: umhm] and all the seasons. Um, so I guess that's, that's important. Um, I don't know if young people really care too much, especially if you were born here. That's the only thing you're expose to [J: right] what they're going to mean to us, they're normal. So, but I think a lot of people you know, after they move away might miss that, or regret you know, that they weren't in a special area. [J: Right, uh huh] So natural, natural beauty I would say.

J: Well we are a beautiful city I'd have to say. I do like that part the best I would say too. Um, what would you say is the worst thing?

H: Um, the worst thing about North Adams would probably be its, I think its limited opportunities. Um, basically there's no, no incentive you know, like I said, for, for young people to stay. And in the school when there's you know, less funding for example, you know there are simply less classes than other schools offering. [J: Umhm] Um, less apparatus you know, to use in the labs and everything. [J: Right] So I think in many ways it's limited in that's you

know, an unfortunate circumstance in North Adams. [J: Umhm]

J: Um, do you think that the worst things out weigh the best things?

H: The worst things out weigh the best things?

J: If you had to make a list which would be longer?

H: I would say, yeah, I would say unfortunately they'd probably do um, (--) You know North Adams right now is basically not doing much [J: umhm] and that's you know, a sign to me that there are more worst things than there are good things.

J: Right. Um, do you have any idea what could be done so that some of the bad things could either be decreased, or turn, even turned into good things so that our [unclear] might change itself?

H: Well as much as we'd like to think otherwise I think uh, money rules a great deal of the world. And what we need is you know, funds to, funds to improve education, funds to um you know, improve the attractability of the city you know, say to business or whatever.

J: Right.

H: So I think uh, you know, we certainly have (--) If we want to improve we certainly have to have a lot of pride in our community. [J: Umhm] You know, where all, all of the money in the world won't do us any good. But you know, if we did and we could improve our city you know, so that businesses um, would want to come here, [J: right] and so that maybe the education system was better, or more activities you know, [J: umhm, right] for students to keep out of, out of trouble, uh, I think that would probably help. Help North Adams a great deal.

J: Well um, as you mentioned about funds and we do need those, [few words unclear] a question about Mass MoCA. What is your opinion on Mass MoCA as to whether it will succeed or not, and what it will and will not do for this city?

H: I think um, Mass MoCA will and can succeed. But I think the people in North Adams have a lot of uh, ideas about Mass MoCa that just aren't going to come through. [J: Which are?] It's not going to I don't think employ you know, a great deal of people. How many people work at a museum? Well they might have a few security guards, tour guides, but I mean you know, that's not a business. It's not employing (--)

J: And they'll all probably come in from out of town anyway.

H: Yeah, and the businesses that it will help out will be the, the tourist type industries um, which are basically service industries which are better than nothing, but you know, employ high school kids, pay five dollars an hour. [J: Umhm] So you know, we could have a lot of restaurants, motels, but I don't know if that's going to improve the city a great deal. [J: Right] It might, it might in many ways draw out the suffering [J: umhm] you know, of a dying city. [J: Right]

But I think MoCA itself can succeed. I just don't know if it will have that many positive effects on North Adams.

J: Do you think there are any potential problems if it did, if it did come through?

H: I don't think there are any important problems. Uh, you know, politicians complain about the lack of parking [J: chuckles] and all these, all these things, but they, they can all be fixed.

J: But I guess (--)

H: It could, like if people were to move here [J: That's what I'm getting at] say you know, house, house prices could rise that could, I mean it could hurt the people who simply can't afford for that to happen. [J: Right, umhm] But I don't (--) I mean it's hard for anyone to say how important that will be, but that's, that's one, it's one possibility of uh, bad, bad effects that could take place.

J: Um, that, that was mainly what I was thinking about. Um, would you say that you're ever "embarrassed" to be a part of the North Adams community?

H: Personally I don't, I've never had that problem. Um, like when I went (--) I intended to move away from North Adams for college. So when I went for interviews or whatever, and I mentioned North Adams, it basically meant no one, nothing to anyone. You know, they never heard of it.

J: Umhm, right. Umhm.

H: So I explained to them you know, it's near Albany, New York kind of. Nowhere near Boston. So I mean the impression that they got was whatever I gave them. And I didn't give them a negative impression. Um, I didn't try to anyway. So I don't, personally I've never run into that problem. But I know many people who you know, talk to you know, individuals in the area who know the city and they say, "oh yeah, that's the teen pregnancy capital of the world." Or you know, do you, do you have houses up there, or do you just live in the streets? You know, they, they have very negative impressions of the city. [J: Um] But personally I haven't had that problem.

J: Well that's, that's good to hear. I know a lot of other people feel a little differently than you. Um, do you think that the way some of the other people feel when they might feel embarrassed, do you think that has to do with other people's community, uh, feelings outside of the community?

H: Um, you mean when people are embarrassed?

J: The people that are embarrassed of our city, do you think that they're embarrassed because of what people outside of our city think and say?

H: Well I think they're embarrassed on the instant, because someone said that I guess. [J:

Right] But I don't think that will change their overall view of the city. You know, if they like it here they're just going to say, "well he doesn't know what he's talking about. He's never been in North Adams, what does he know." [J: Umhm] But I think a lot of time if you're continually run into that type of situation maybe that's where your lack of pride comes from. You know, if every time you leave someone's telling you, "uh, North Adams" [J: Umhm] well how much pride are you going to have in the community? It's going to be hard to, to stay proud of something that no one enjoys.

J: That's true. Um, now I'm going to ask your opinion about the Greylock Glen in the same kind of a situation as Mass MoCA. Do you think that that's going to ever come through?

H: Well I can't, I can't uh, sort of knowing so much about the Greylock Glen, I know [J: me neither] it's another basically tourist type um, industry in Adams. Uh, I don't know what the Greylock Glen will do for North Adams. You know, it may bring more tourist to the general area. You know, anyone visiting Adams [J: right] is apt to come to North Adams. [J: Right] But again uh, the same reasons as MoCA, I don't know if that's positive or negative. [J: Umhm] You know, tourist dollars will help, but the dollars will be in, in uh, in restaurants and motels. You know, they help anyway, but it's not as good as from having businesses in the area. [J: Right]

J: That would be a little bit harder. There are probably going to be a couple that would open. [H: yeah] For the people that are already trying to compete with, it probably is going to be a little bit difficult.

side one ends
side two begins

J: Okay, we're back again. Do you think that North Adams will ever become the industrious city that it used to be years ago?

H: Um, well I don't think that it will. And I don't think it necessarily wants to be. You know, there are a lot of changes that have taken place. Um, I think it could become an industrial city, but hopefully with you know, more modern, more modern uh, technology involved. [J: Umhm] You know, you don't want to (--) We don't want to return to the 1900's. Early 1900's. But I think industry is the key, key to improving this city.

J: Umhm. Do you think um, that, you mentioned before, kind of like a ghost town. But do you think that it would ever be possible that we might just become another [dust bowl?]

H: Um, I guess it's possible. Yeah, I don't, I would hope that's not the uh, the conclusion of the city. But [J: umhm] um, you know, the possibility is like a worse case scenario that could happen if you know, if nothing, nothing else positive comes to this city.

J: Right, umhm. Um, my grandfather tells me often, he's a very strong North Adams person and my grandmother is a very strong Williamstown person, and he keeps telling both of us that someday North Adams is going to rise and become you know, come back on the map again. [H:

Umhm] And he keeps saying you know, big businesses are going to come in. They're going to take over and North Adams is going to be a great place again someday. Uh, what's your opinion of that?

H: Well I don't, I'm not sure that North Adams is going to rise to rule the world, let's put it that way. [J: Chuckles] Uh, trouble basically I think with the city right now is, why would industry come here? There's no international airport let's say. [Few words unclear] doesn't really count. [J: Laughs] Um, you know, it's very difficult to get here. There's no, unfortunately we're not near the ocean, [J: right] or any major river, so we can't, [J: umhm] we can't have shipping. Uh, and as far as any land transportation goes, let's face it, there's no high way in North Adams. Uh, [J: current highway] [Both laugh] well I'm talking about highways. [J: Yeah, I know] You know, possibly a bypass to the turn, the uh, Mass Turnpike would help. You know, but of course Pittsfield and the southern Berkshire County is against that. And it's going to be very difficult. So I don't (--) I mean I think if, if there was a major thru-way you know, to, to get trucks you know, and products into the area that might, might help North Adams turn around. But it's hard to see why anyone would come here you know, and have, have to ship their products out over the Mohawk Trail. You know that take a lot of time, it takes a lot of extra fuel. [J: possible accidents too] Yeah, a lot of possible accidents, especially in the winter. [J: Umhm] So you know, I think that's, that's in the way of North Adams rising right now.

J: Right. Um, in synopsis of North Adams is there anything particular that you can remember from the day that you were old enough to remember anything that you, you know, really thought was either special, or you just really want to share?

H: Um, [J: good or bad, or maybe both] the first, the first things that I remember about North Adams um, it basically involves like the, the bad weather in the winters. Um you know, because when we're, when I was little of course there was a lot of fun sitting in the living room and watch the cars slide down the street in the winter. So you know, that type of thing, I mean although it might be in place the television as, as enjoyment for children I think that's you know, the dangers of traveling in that is also important in North Adams. There are times when you simply can't get out. You know a big snowstorm can, [J: umhm] can close the city off. [J: Comment unclear] Close both the uh, The Mohawk Trail and the [Tyconic?] Trail sometimes. You know, there's no way east or west out of the city. You have to go south. So you know, I think that's just the key to the transportation problem you know, isn't only the lack of roadways, but the bad weather we do have and the hills of course add, add to that problem.

J: Um. Assuming once again that you will have a family and children and probably grandchildren, um, if you ever happen to come back to North Adams, would there be any little stories that you'd have to share with them?

H: Um, I'd hope at the time I could tell them about how North Adams used to have problems. [Both chuckle] Uh, you know, I'd hope the place was recovered and the stories would be about the hard times we went through. Um, if that hasn't turned around then there isn't much you know, important about [J: Right] telling stories about hard times, because [J: when there's no one here] we're still in hard times. But I'd hope that would be the, the difference if I ever came back.

J: Um, I would hope so too. Um, are there any major problems that you can see in the North Adams community that you feel are really infecting us as a community on the whole, such as drugs, alcohol, pregnancy and abortion, suicide, teenage or otherwise, or any kind of thing like that.

H: Just give me a few of these at a time. Uh, I think the drug use in the city is obviously there.

[J: Right] Um, I don't, I don't think it's as bad as other communities in that although we have people definitely who are addicted and definitely you know, who need help, there's no um, pressure I don't think to use drugs unless you want to. You have to kind of make the choice. Um, you know, people just don't often walk up to you and say, "you want to buy some drugs?" You know, there's no pressure I don't think, except maybe from your friends. If they're using it you know, they may well, if you want to be like them so you've got to use the drugs like they do. But you know, I don't think like dealers, I don't think there's a lot of drug pushing in North Adams. So I mean it's, it is definitely a problem but you can keep yourself out of the problem you know, if you have self-motivation and say to do that. [J: Umhm, right]

Um, some of these other problems? Uh, let's say teen pregnancy in North Adams I think is, is over rated a great deal. There are a lot of teens pregnant, yes. But people say just because um, you know, a lot of girls in high school have babies, okay this eighteen pregnancy rate is high. I don't think that's true. I think if you go to Williamstown teen pregnancy rate is just as high you know, but maybe in a richer community there's a lot more pressure from your parents. You know, if your parents are a lawyer and a doctor say, you know, well they don't want their daughter to have a baby, it will look bad on the community you know, or it will look bad on the family. It's you know, a real rich family say. Um, so I think like in, in those cases there might be a lot more pressure you know, to have an abortion or to, to take care of the pregnancy before you have your baby. [J: Umhm] You know, I think girls in North Adams a lot of times have children because that's the one thing in life that they can enjoy, you know? This is something they can do and you know, no one can well, no one can criticize them you know, for doing it wrong let's say. [J: Right] It's something that's all, all to, all to their own. Um, so I mean I think teen, teen pregnancy is a problem, but I think it's as bad in other communities. [J: Right, umhm]

Let's (--) What else do we have? [J: Alcohol is another one] Alcoholism? Um, alcoholism of course is here, yes, but I think you know, the major difficulty with alcoholism is when you sit down in your car um, behind the wheel after you've been drinking. I don't think you know, there are, there are few instances and those that make, those make the newspaper. I don't think drinking and driving is really um, has really caused that many problems. You know, you hear maybe one case a year where someone is hurt, [J: umhm] or dies sometimes. Um, you know, and that's, that's important news. We need to, to do something about it. Um, you know and I'm not saying people don't drink and drive. I know kids that drink and drive every weekend, [J: umhm] but you know some people do have more control over a motor vehicle while they're drunk, you know? Some people have more control over their, their body in general when they're drunk. So a lot of that is hidden. [J: Umhm] But um, you know I think there's a lot of pressure now against people. You know, they have designated driver, or just not to drink. And I think that's working to a great [unclear].

J: What was your impression um, speaking of alcohol, what was your impression of the Eddy

Film that we saw the other day in school? Do you think that affected a lot of kids, or do you think it just kind of went over everybody's head?

H: Um, well to tell you the truth I think it affected a lot of kids [J: coughs] you know, at the time. But I don't know when they go to the next party and they're offered beer, I don't know if they're going to say, "uh, Eddy told me not too." [J: Yeah] You know I think most kids who drink do it basically um, do to peer pressure I'd have to say. [J: Umhm] Now if you're at a party and everyone else is drinking, well you're going to drink. [J: and I'm sure it won't be coffee] You don't want to you know, stick out in a crowd. So I don't know, it's, it's hard for me to believe that it had much of an affect, a lasting affect, but I would hope that it did. You know, it would be good if it did. [J: Right] But I don't think um, you know, it's going to stop kids from drinking.

J: Umhm. Well I guess it's a problem that North Adams had, but I guess a lot of people you know, [H: I think it's] it's not really out in the open.

H: You know, I think it's a universal problem. [J: Yeah, definitely, umhm] You know, it is a problem North Adams has, but Eddy, you know, Eddy came to seventy some other schools too. [J: Right] So um, you know, it's (--) You know I think there's this big effort, you know, against alcoholism. [J: Umhm] And I think it is, you know, working to some extent. You know, it's cut, I think it's cut down a lot the deaths say, on the highways you know, [unclear].

J: Definitely. Uh, the last one that we had was suicide in [H: suicide] teenagers, or otherwise. [H: Um,] I know [unclear] at North Adams, but there was a [unclear] suicide [unclear] not long ago.

H: It's hard to say. I know [unclear] I think I (--) There was one student in my class who died when he was a freshman um, he actually, he was outside at night and froze to death basically. He was drunk that's why. Um, suicide is kind of foreign type of thing. Uh, it's hard for me to imagine why someone would want to kill themselves. You know, yes, they're depressed you know with their parents or their friends, at school. I've been depressed with my parents, friends, and school, but never to that extent. Um, you know I think kids, kids that are thinking of suicide leave many signs. You know they don't, I don't think they want to do it. And I think they, you know they talk about the signs of suicide. Maybe giving, giving their most valued possessions away, or, or even talking about it, you know, [J: umhm] mentioning it in passing. And I think that's a problem that can be controlled you know. If people you know, if your friends are talking about it, well you've got to get them help, you know? [J: Right, umhm] And I think that's something that can be controlled more so than the others. Um, because there isn't really any peer pressure to commit suicide. [J: Umhm] Let's face it there's no parental pressure to commit suicide. There's no pressure from your teachers to commit suicide. There's just (--) You know I, (--) So I think that's something that's a conscious decision that the individual makes. But I think since there's no pressure from around them to do it that you know, they can be, they can be stopped if you, if you get them help.

J: Okay. Um, so then I would say that I guess what you're saying is there really is hope for kids. Not in just North Adams, but in all of the communities that have problems like this. And there

I'm sure are people out there.

H: I would say there's a lot of hope and you know, recently there are a lot of programs starting you know, "just say no, um to drugs". Um, alcoholism, you've got designated driver, you know. [J: Right] I think there are a lot of possibilities, you know. Although we may never solve the problems I think we can eliminate it as you know, a big problem.

J: Right, umhm. Before we come to a close I would like to ask you a really important question. And this has to do with goals and ideas. Has your growing up in North Adams and being educated here and being around with a community environment, the people that you are around, has that in North Adams in general affected the goals that you have and the beliefs that you hold?

H: I don't think so. Um, I've you know, the goals that I've set for myself I think are just that. I've set myself. I don't think North Adams had a great deal to do with them. Um, they can affect you know, maybe the aspirations you have can be affected by you know, the city you live in. Maybe since you know, North Adams doesn't have too many examples of success. [J: umhm] Um, too many successful you know, citizens, or outstanding citizens, maybe you know in many ways that can hold, hold you back from setting your goals. But I don't think it affected me in that way. [J: Umhm] I think the goals that I set for myself um, you know, would be, would have been the same no matter where I was. Um, I don't see North Adams as an important factor in that matter.

J: Do you kind of wish that maybe it was? I mean maybe things could be different?

H: Um, I don't things would be different for me. I think possibly you know, some people would weigh their, their home town as a more important factor in that, so North Adams could help them, you know? Um, some, some students maybe who aren't planning on even succeeding [chuckles] you know, to speak of in life, they don't, don't have that many goals, maybe if North Adams was a more positive background you know, maybe they would aspire to something better.

J: Umhm. Well I guess we should probably close now. But before we do I just want to ask you if there is anything about North Adams, or anything that you've come across that you just want to leave the new generation with?

H: Um, I think an important lesson that anyone who has lived in North Adams has to learn is that you know, you have to be a part of it. If you want to change you can't just sit around and wait for it. It's time to do something. Um, you know, there needs to be an effort to improve North Adams. And you can't just depend on you know, the mayor saying nice words. You can't depend on that changing the city. You know, you have to get involved in the community if you want, if you want to make it better. And I think um, you know, that anyone who's lived here and honestly wants to make the city better must, must have learned that. You know, they, they have, you can't just wait for things to improve. You've got to help them improve. You'd be waiting for a long time if you just sit back and wait.

J: Hm. Umhm. That's really good advice. Uh, I just want to thank you very much for your interview.

H: You're welcome.

J: And it's been really great talking to you. And with things like this I really find things about people that I never knew before. And I guess that's why they have us do these things.